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Masters
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A Book of Verses

Edgar Lee Masters

LITERATURE HOUSE / GREGG PRESS
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Republished in 1970 by
LITERATURE HOUSE
an imprint of The Gregg Press
121 Pleasant Avenue
Upper Saddle River, N. J. 07458

Standard Book Number–8398-1252-3
Library of Congress Card–77-104524

PS
3525
A83
B65
1970

Reprinted from the original edition in the
Wesleyan University Library
Middletown, Connecticutt

Printed in United States of America

A BOOK OF VERSES

A Book of Verses

BY
EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Chicago
Way & Williams
1898

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WAY & WILLIAMS

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ODE TO AUTUMN

SEASON of gusty days and cloudy nights,
The wind which showers wine apples to the ground
Blows at midday the long, pale, lunar lights
O'er weedy fields with melancholy sound.
Summer has gone, but she has left a show
Of downy clouds against the autumn sky,
Which the chill breezes chafe until they glow—

Ghosts of that luxury
Which now is by.

The golden trees against a sky of June
Seem like a life that is too soon
grown gray;
Through smothering clouds the large
autumnal moon
Rolls argently her undiminished way.
The wonder of night's bright processional
Abates not with the fading of the
flowers,
Still glorious on all the earth doth fall—
But for those withered bowers
The pain is ours.

Here in my garden all the rich repose,
The silence and the trance of summer
eves

Has passed into a death presaging doze;
The air is twinkling with the falling leaves
And sad elf-sighs do fill each little dell.
Yet when the wind booms from the vale below
The moon is shaken like a cockleshell,
Through the long, ragged bough
That moans its woe.

If spring and summer be thy mask, O year,
Which falls in autumn, leaving hideous
The thing we deemed was to our being dear,
Then life may not be that it seems to us
In youth—but sometime may reveal—

When the worn heart the shock
can scarcely bear
A countenance to make the spirit reel,
On reefs of keen despair,
To perish there.

Ah, many a time and oft on nights like
this
The whip-poor-will has sent abroad
her song
From depths of anguish and from heights
of bliss.
Now is it fancy? But methought
along
The withered fringes of the tangled
grass
A few belated crickets sent a shrill
Of hesitating song—this, too, must
pass;

Their little voices still
On mead and hill.

The night wind rises and the clouds which spume
Dark from the faint and starry-lighted west
Are edged with fire against their heavy gloom.
'Tis time that I should seek the thoughtless rest
Which day denies—much that we deeply prize
Doth stir the mind's reflections and awake
The pains which else had slumbered—in such wise
Rich, fruitful autumn, dear, for thine own sake

Through thy most fair disguise
We see Death's eyes.

A DREAM OF ITALY

DEAR heart, this leaf and blossom move
Old hopes whose memory ne'er departs,
Plucked from dust that lies above
The heart of hearts.

In our rough clime where skies are gray
O'er leafless trees in winter's time
We dreamed of a serener day
Through books of rhyme.

We saw the sky of Italy,
We breathed the odor of its flowers,

And sailed o'er wastes of azure sea—
The world was ours.

Since, from the lands whereto our ships
In spirit sailed by wind and wave,
You send these frail and fragrant tips
From Shelley's grave.

I turn to that dear hearth which knows
Nor you, nor me, nor shall again,
And ask if aught before you shows
By field or glen,

Great ruins, mountains, crystal lakes,
Serenest seas or castled streams,
So bright as those our memory takes
From our youth's dreams?

What glory lingers o'er that land,

Like that we saw in classic song,
With thought and fancy hand in hand,
Far from the throng?

The shadow of our maple trees
To Dante's voice was native too;
And Plato conversed here at ease
The bright day through.

Now all we dreamed of lies before
Your eyes, the past is now a dream;
I only hope that sea and shore
Will take the gleam

From memory of those afternoons,—
When all the world was true and fair—
Whose light was blent with rising moons,
And fragrant air.

Men's hearts must crumble like the blooms
You sent, but from them may arise
The light that shall dispel the glooms
Of distant skies.

For genius throws o'er all this earth
The glory of a higher sphere,
And makes this humble flower worth
A noble tear.

AN INVOCATION

SWEET spring that brings the open sky.
Fresh water and melodious wind;
And odors like the thoughts which lie
In souls grown better having sinned
Life springs anew within the heart,
Beneath thy smile—all lovely as thou art.

How trivial are the griefs we have,
How greater is our good than ill.
And even the singly cherished grave
So open to the winter's will
Is overgrown with flowers so fair,

Death is disrobed, and hope shuts out
despair.

Breathe in our souls, dear mother earth
The natural pleasure which is thine;
The sweet contentment and the mirth
Which springs from strength, from
peace divine.
Temper our lives to east wind and to west
And pillow us upon thy ample breast.

RELATEDNESS

ALL things are related, the inventor's thought
Has modeled the iron and shaped its form,
And lo, something new on the earth is wrought,
And the blood of the millions is flowing warm.

And the poet who looks from his eagle height
Has searched its meaning within his mind—
The simile, figure, the spiritual light
Which gives a new hope to mankind.

WHEN UNDER THE ICY EAVES

WHEN under the icy eaves
The swallow heralds the sun,
And the dove for its lost mate grieves
And the young lambs play and run;
When the sea is a plane of glass,
And the blustering winds are still,
And the strength of the thin snows pass
In mists o'er the tawny hill—
The spirit of life awakes
In the fresh flags by the lakes.

When the sick man seeks the air,
And the graves of the dead grow
green,

Where the children play unaware
    Of the faces no longer seen;
When all we have felt or can feel,
    And all we are or have been,
And all the heart can hide or reveal,
    Knocks gently, and enters in:—
The spirit of life awakes,
In the fresh flags by the lakes.

THE WOOD

THE wood that echoed to our shout
Is still with winter's loneliness,
Save when the Storm King is about
With cries of strange distress;
The brook is frozen, the hill is bare,
And gray clouds fill the biting air—
'Tis melancholy weather.

Yet dreary time shall we not say
Dark as thou art, that thou shalt stay?
For when the springtime comes again,
We shall not be as we were when
We roamed the wood together.

IN THE VALE

LIKE some star-hidden lute whereon
These wailing autumn winds were drawn,
This vale is magic, and the trees
Breathe to the air the melodies
Of dying nature's reveries.

The sunlight streams upon the wood,
But they are tuneless solitudes.
And in the heavens near and far
Like chariots driven on to war,
White clouds to mock the summer's mirth
Look down upon the faded earth.
To what far heaven are they led
Now that the latest flower is dead?

THE VISION

OF that dear vale where you and I have lain
Scanning the mysteries of life and death
I dreamed, though how impassable the space
Of time between the present and the past.
This was the vision that possessed my mind ;
Methought the weird and gusty days of March
Had eased themselves in melody and peace.
Pale lights, swift shadows, lucent stalks, clear streams
Cool, rosy eves behind the penciled mesh

Of hazel thickets, and the huge feathered
boughs
Of walnut trees stretched singing to the
blast ;
And the first pleasantries of sheep and
kine ;
The cautioned twitterings of hidden
birds ;
The flight of geese among the scattered
clouds ;
Night's weeping stars and all the
pageantries
Of awakened life had blossomed into
May,
Whilst she with trailing violets in her
hair
Blew music from the stops of watery
stems
And swept the grasses with her viewless
robes

Which dreaming men thought voices, dreaming still.
Now as I lay in vision by the stream
That flows amidst our well beloved vale,
I looked throughout the vista stretched between
Two ranging hills ; one meadowed rich in grass ;
The other wooded, thick and quite obscure
With overgrowth, rank in the luxury
Of all wild places, but ever growing sparse
Of trees or saplings on the sudden slope
That met the grassy level of the vale ;—
But nathless in the shadow of those woods,
Which sprinkled all beneath with fragrant dew

There grew all flowers, which tempted little paths
Between them, up and on into the wood.
Here, as the sun had left his midday peak
The incommunicable blue of heaven blent
With his fierce splendor, filling all the air
With softened glory, while the pasturage
Trembled with color of the poppy blooms
Shook by the steps of the swift-sandaled wind.
Nor any sound beside disturbed the dream
Of Silence slumbering on the drowsy flowers.
Then as I looked upon the widest space
Of open meadow where the sunlight fell
In veils of tempered radiance, I saw
The form of one who had escaped the care

And equal dullness of our common day.
For like a bright mist rising from the earth
He made appearance, growing more distinct
Until I saw the stole, likewise the lyre
Grasped by the fingers of the modeled hand.
Yea, I did see the glory of his hair
Against the deep green bay-leaves filleting
The ungathered locks. And so throughout the vale
His figure stood distinct and his own shade
Was the sole shadow. Deeming this approach
Augur of good, as if in hidden ways
Of loveliness the gods do still appear

The counselors of men, and even where
Wonder and meditation wooed us oft,
I cried, "Apollo"—and his form dissolved,
As if the nymphs of echo, who took up
The voice and bore it to the hollow wood,
By that same flight had startled the great god
To vanishment. And thereupon I woke,
And disarrayed the figment of my thought.
For of the very air, magic with hues,
Blent with the distant objects, I had formed
The splendid apparition, and so knew
It was, alas! a dream within a dream!

THE FIFTH ACT

THE viol is broke, and the sculptured vase it is shattered;
Wild winds make the flying curtains to writhe at the door.
The bright star is lost and its golden splendor is scattered,
And the loved face is seen at its wonted place nevermore,
When the spirit is dull and dumb.

For I know that the ray of the star is stopped in its flight
By the heavy darkness, through which it must pierce, like truth.

Darkness conquers at last, and the scepter belongs to night.
Lost is the wildness and lost is the sweetness of blooming youth—
When the spirit is dull and dumb.

And the windows are darkened not, though the sound of the wheel
Is a whirr that can scarce be heard as it slowly turns;
And the strings are yet whole on the viol, which no more feel
The electric touch of hope and of love, whose music burns
The spirits of those not dull.

One day is the same, and one week is the same with the rest;
Gray skies are as futile as fair, for the soul, like a well

Deep down in the earth, of the heaven is
baned nor blest.
It hath its own blackness; no light, save
the light of hell—
When the spirit is dull and dumb.

And he who may chance to pass through
the hall of life
Should know that the chamber is closed,
if the tenant be there,
The issue unknown, and secret the scene
of his strife;
But the door is ajar of the dead, or those
whom despair
Has made dull the spirit and dumb.

Look within! for the goblet lies prone,
and has spilled its wine
On the floor, and the lamp is a wreck,
and its flame has died;

For the tenant is lost in his visions,
which are not thine,
And Life sits sadly apart in tears, like a
scorned bride,
For the spirit is dull and dumb.

SPRING

WHEN stars are moist as baby's eyes,
And the warm south wind blows over the grass,
And through the blue and balmy skies
Skeins of white clouds swiftly pass;

When sugar water freely flows,
And chanticleer leads forth his brood,
And breaking stalks the farmer goes,
And Mary doffs her winter hood;

When boys fly kites high in the air,
And meadow larks nest in the plain,
And water-rushes spring, and wear
A pale green from the tender rain;

When in the brown rust of the log
The violet shoots its purple flame;
And by the lakes the hunter's dog
Seeks the master's wounded game;

When the April moon is an Indian boat,
And lovers take the longest path;
And nightly sylvan whispers float
And every tree its Dryad hath—
Then spring has come, and you shall see
Pink blooms on the apple tree.

ODE TO NIGHT

ITHURIEL sun, thy bright wand is
That which takes away the bliss
Of the phantom wandering free,
Sporting in his liberty.
Morn, whose piercing argencies
Scatter, nestling under trees,
Shadows of Hesperides;
Of the maidens, three in number,
And the dragon whose red eyes
Never closed in slumber.

When the moon is climbing well
To her topmost pinnacle,
Ev'ry hill, and lawn, and dale
Sleeps behind a silver veil.

O'er the quiet landscape drawn;
Till the sun, waked by the dawn,
Gazes with his eyes of tawn;
And when Cynthia leaves her cloud,
Round Pan's feet the wood nymphs crowd;
Stepping, peering cautiously
To his dreamy minstrelsy.
All is changed; they run away,
Following Pan as best they may,
Gathering 'round him who sits down
Underneath a gnarled oak's frown,
To hear the great god play.

Science like the sun's bright glare
Thou hast but the Cyclop's stare;
Microscopic, which reveals
Hill and valley bare, and steals
Ev'ry Dryad from its tree.

Moon that art romance!
Thou hast more of harmony
O'er this world, which is a dream.
Thou dost make an Arcady
Of each wood and stream.
Filled with satyrs, gods, and fauns,
Tripping o'er the shaded lawns.
Science, thou dost analyze,
Tales of earth and of the skies;
Thou wilt give us in return
Naught for that, which thou hast torn
From the human heart away
Till it aches with agony.

Ithuriel sun, thy bright wand is
That which takes away the bliss
Of the phantom, wandering free,
Sporting in his liberty.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE DES-PLAINES FOREST

THE sun has sunk below the level plain,
And yet above the forest's leafy gloom
The glory of the evening lightens still.
Smooth as a mirror is the river's face
With Heaven's light, and all its radiant clouds
And shadows which against the river's shore
Already are as night. From some retreat
Obscure and lonely, evening's saddest bird
Whistles, and beyond the water comes
The musical reply, and silence reigns—

Save for the noisy chorus of the frogs,
And undistinguished sounds of faint portent
That night has come. There is a rustic bridge
Which spans the stream, from which we look below
At Heaven above; 'till revery reclaims
The mind from hurried thought and merges it
Into the universal mind which broods
O'er such a scene. Strange quietude o'erspreads
The restless flame of being, and the soul
Beholds its source and destiny and feels
Not sorrowful to sink into the breast
Of that large life whereof it is a part.
What are we? But the question is not solved

Here in the presence of intensest
thought;
Where nature stills the clamor of the
world
And leaves us in communion with our-
selves.
Hence to the strivings of the clear-eyed
day
What take we that shall mitigate the
pangs
That each soul is alone, and that all
friends
Gentle and wise and good can never
soothe
The ache of that sub-consciousness
which is
Something unfathomed and unmedicin-
ed.
Yet this it is which keeps us in the path

Of some ambition, cherished or pursued;
The still, small voice that is not quieted
By disregard, but ever speaks to us
Its mandates while we wake or sleep, and asks
A closer harmony with that great scheme
Which is the music of the universe.

So as the cherubim of Heaven defend
The realms of the unknown with flaming swords,
Thence are we driven to the world which is
Ours to be known through Art, who beckons us
To excellence, and in her rarer moods
Casts shadowy glances of serener lands;
Where all the serious gods, removed from stress
And interruption, build as we conceive;

In fellowship that knows not that reserve
Which clouds the hearts of those who wish to live
As they, in that large realm of perfect mind.

UNDER THE PINES

UNDER the pines
Where the night winds
Mourn for the world.
Where scarcely moon or star
Beams in the dark so far,
Where the dead leaves are whirled
Under the pines.

Sweeter this voice than all
Instruments musical.
Come the bright visions flown,
Wraiths of the summer gone—
Under the pines.

Spirits of air may pass
Over the withered grass,
Naught shall invoke the tune
Dead with the perished June.
Under the pines.

Now that the mid-night reigns
How the wild wind complains
Under the pines.
Ah could the heart but know
Aught of the life below—
Under the pines!

A SONG OF COURAGE

NO cowards are we, though our way
has been dark with the lion.
No sluggards are we, our hands from
our cloaks we have taken.
We have striven and won all the
heights worth the having and
winning.

Our life is a grievous thing, and its
moments of pleasure
Like dew all ablaze with the lightning
outspread by the morning

Are heavy as lead on the wings of the
infinite spirit.

Our hearts are as urns which are filled
from the rivers of heaven,
And sealed with the powers of life, 'till
death breaks the vessel
And the waters return to their source
by the throne of Jehovah.

We reck not what thunders are stored
in the clouds that are o'er us ;
We scorn all the lightnings concealed
in the sheath of the darkness.
We pass—and no power can alter the
trend of our beings.

Should we then regret what has been or
fear what may happen hereafter,

We are part of the logic that travels
from planets to atoms.
Whatever has been, it will be, though
the nations deplore it.

The sky is above with its stars and the
sounding sea is around us.
We drink in the souls of the dead, and
live by the strength of the ages.
The life of the world is a growth, and
each race of men stands up higher.

I know not why man should survive in
another existence,
Nor why he should cease with the unfit-
ting death that o'er takes him—
But if the gods strike they must lift him
to aid them in heaven.

A PASTORAL SCENE

THE sunken sun has left a golden haze
Above the boundless fields, and like a band
The rim of distant forests meets the gaze,
A ring of ebony around the land.

There is no sound of bird or insect save
The warbling of the robin all unseen
Amid the orchard's fastness where each wave
Of wind brings scent of fruit and grasses green.

The farmer's dog, whose distant bark is heard,
Welcomes the swain and gladdens his return.
He greets his children with a loving word,
And cheerful candles through the window burn.

Hushed is the forest, rife with noise by day,
Until the moon appears above the hill;
When numerous locusts drone their changeless lay,
And in the covert sings the whip-poor-will.

Lo! her bright disc already peeps above
The upland meadow, and the evening breeze
Springs on strong pinions from the silent grove
And sets to whispering all the leafy trees.

IN AUTUMN

THE day is dead, the moon is high
A globe of fire in air.
The owlets whoop, the crickets cry
In meadows brown and bare.
And heavy mists obscure the sky,
Like thoughts of brooding care.

The dead leaves rustle where we tread,
The winds are whistling low.
And all we loved too soon has fled
Ere winter winds shall blow;
And on yon tree to mock the dead
Sits perched the sable crow

THE DEAD HEART

JUST as the summer dieth,
When every flower is blown,
And by the wayside lieth,
And every bird has flown!
So dies the heart, when sorrow
No more from joy can borrow,
And hope turns from to-morrow—
And all the world is known.

With summer hardly ended
A film of death comes o'er
The sky, and all things splendid,
The bright sun gone before.

This is in sooth Time's fiat,
Where love and life ran riot,
Now color and sound are quiet,
And low winds seek the shore.

Passive, but not forgetting,
What pain hath bound our brows,
Sad, and yet not regretting
Gay revel and carouse.
Naught shall the heart encumber
In days that Life shall number
She numbed its sense with slumber—
And Life shall not arouse.

AN ETCHING

THE dull sky and the yellow meads;
And the stripped trees moaning in the blast.
The mind that thinks, and the heart that bleeds,
The unborn day and the buried past,
And this gray Sphynx called Life.

THE MYSTERY

THE eternal mystery remains,
And we may never compass it.
Life turns and reaching out attains
The cold airs of the infinite.
And swiftly whirling scorns our wit,
Until a current forms to wend
Our steps along within its trend.

Who may unshred the magic lines
That keep his feet upon a way,
And search the spell 'till he divines
The inner motive of the play?

Cerberus keeps our steps at bay
Though Science glances full and free,
And Plutus taunts her with the key.

So Æschylos was wonder-eyed
In gazing on this warp and woof,
The while his muse forever cried
In hidden tones, some power aloof
Hangs o'er us, else the heavens roof
The earth for naught, nor life should feel
Immortal airs around it steal.

Poets and seers, Homer, Mohammed,
Felt the current underneath
This sea of time, whose tides are fed
By wonder of the transient breath—
That wanders from the shores of death,

They felt, but saw as in a dream
The shore-ward movement of the stream.

Ever we tremble at the edge
That bounds the eternal's sacred sphere.
High cliffs of frowning granite hedge
That place of hope and fear,
And unseen forces guide and steer
The ships to doom, or where they rest
Amid the Islands of the Blest!

A WISH

WHEN the trump of doom shall sound
Let me lie in peace thereof.
Sweet oblivion have I found
Far removed from hate and love.
Who would wake to life eternal
Hazarding his joy or woe,
When he rests from things diurnal
Where the springs of Lethe flow?
Life that loved us not, has gone—
Shall we take up what is done?
Though the trump of doom be blown
Let me lie in peace below!

ALL IS FANCY

LET the form of beauty be
Wrapped in fancy's mystery.
Look and dream, but wish no more
For the white sails far from shore.
For on board those sails are gray
With the ocean's breath and spray.
And the silken cord and tassel,
With the fierce winds forced to wrestle,
Are but coarsest ropes and black,
Fit to bear the tempest's wrack.

Dreams of Life gave you no grace—
Then you met her face to face.
Now you dream of Death, and he
Mocks your fondest revery.
Clasp His seeming form and find
All the pain you left behind.

ALMOST

KING Tippu Tib, a savage and no more
Walked all alone along the ocean's shore
And found a shell he had not seen before.

As lightning leaps from depths of darkest night
A great thought filled his struggling mind with light
And overpowered him with its angel might.

For as he looked upon the spiral shell,

A wonder strong as truth upon him fell,
He held its meaning for an instant well.

The nodes which girdle it from year to year,
Record its growth into an ampler sphere,
"Ya ho" he cried unto his warriors near.

They raised the cry and ran to do his will
Who feared some strange event of sudden ill
He held the shell and bade them all be still.

He held the shell and beckoned to each one;

They pressed about to see what would
be done
King Tippu Tib was dumb—the thought
was gone!

THE MARTYR

IN an ocean of light, in an ether of life
On the wings of the soul,
I have floated and flown from the sound
of the strife,
From the stress and the dole,
From the shadow of hate and the sombre
eclipse
Of the battle of pain;
From the vision of anger with pallid lips
And the places of gain.

As our hearts were aflame with thy words by the way
When we knew thee no more.
Ah! we burned for our love for the gift of that day
When thy mission was o'er.
Through an ocean of light to the peace of thy throne
With my passion complete,
Oh receive me and keep me forever thine own
In rest at thy feet.

THE EVENING STAR

O EVENING star, not as in youth's
brief glory
Youth's joyous spirit rises rapt, elate
At thy bright vision, even as transitory
As joy that clasps us in this earthly
state—
Do I now greet thee as I did of yore,
Do I imagine, follow and adore.

Pass with the mystery of the early even
To some far fairer sky we know not of—
Aye, so we dream—type of the hope which heaven
Rescued for us with all the soul's deep love.
Earth that we prize fades wholly at a breath;
My spirit quickened when I walked with death!

VULCAN

VULCAN, whose anvil blows
Fashioned the warrior's shield,
Helmet and sword for those
Who die before they yield,
Marvels of strength and skill,
Proof to the battle's ill.
There amid fire and smoke
Patience was still thy Aid.
God-like the hammer's stroke,
So all the instruments of war were made.

He who from year to year
    Hammers his bronze to Truth,
While the world's satyrs jeer,
    While sinks the fire of youth,
Conscious that through all time
There swings the mighty rhyme
    Which will o'er all these forged
        events prevail,
And all their harm—
    He shall not fail,
Life's deeper logic animates his arm.

PSYCHE

KNOWLEDGE, thought, philosophy
Our attendant angels be.
As a moth of evening flies
Where the brightest flames arise—
So our hearts aspire to thee,
Beauteous divinity.

As the sky bends o'er the earth,
So thy power is on the spirit.

Thou hast filled the world with mirth,
And with song for those who hear it.
As the sun draws floating stars
There to melt into his bosom ;
As the subtle-winged airs
Are impregned when bursts the blossom,
So our hearts aspire to thee
Beauteous divinity.

SAPPHO

CLOUDS in heaven frown, and the tide is flowing
Dark, and winds are loud round the promontory;
Still, with wide eyes pensive o'er all the waters;
Sappho, thou lookest.

Bare the rocks and cold for the touch of shoulders,
Veiled no more from eyes, nor from bitter sea-winds;
Now, small hands clasped tight, and with hair disheveled
Death doth beguile thee.

Down beneath thy feet thy soft lyre has
fallen,
Fallen there the coronal leaves whose
edges
Touch the strings, and they to the winds
make answer
Faint, but how mournful.

Beauty, genius, fame, all of these the
high gods
Gave to thee, reserving sweet love, thy
passion
Scorn for love like thine cannot be for-
given,
Here, nor in Hades.

Who was he whose heart he could steel
to music?
Made by hands whose touch was electric
fire.

Star of song, why wert thou enthralled
so fully,
Thus of this Phaon?

Thou whom we have sung in these sterile
seasons,
Praised and loved made drunk with the
sweet of thy song,
Thou whose stole we fain would have
touched to render
Homage and honor,

Thou wert scorned, unloved of this
soulless stripling;
He was free to kiss on thy brow or
tresses
He might sit and list to thy wondrous
singing,
Yet he was unmoved.

Thus at close of day with the breeze that follows,
Darkly o'er the waves, while behind the shadows
Spread and seek the base of the cliff far downward,
Death doth beguile thee.

Vain is life and vain are all things when love is
All the heart desires, and is still beyond it.
Death will love when all have forsaken mortals—
Sappho, thou knewest.

Far at sea a sailor descried a star fall;
Sail and drift at last in the sea and perish;

Fall and fade from sight as it were Hesperus
Sunk in the waters.

Clouds far west are bright, and the tide is flowing;
Round the cliffs the halcyons fly in twilight;
There, the lyre is stirred by the winds of heaven—
Sappho is deathless.

TO A MOTH

SOFT phantom of the summer even-
tide,
From bowers of odorous dusk, thy
noiseless wings
Were closed in slumber when the day-
light died
In some rose garden where the cricket
sings;
Round whom spent petals charged with
summer fell
The lovliest harvest of all lovely
things.

Wherein, until the full moon's gorgeous spell
Awoke nocturnal music in the grass,
And in the shuddering trees, that haunted dell
Of flowering bushes, and a fragrant mass
Of leaves and tendrils, sheltered thy repose.
Whence thou did'st flit to thy fierce fate, alas!
Here in my lamp, whose bright allurance glows,
A treacherous beacon, beaming out afar,
As if it were thy soul's abiding star.

Like some full blossom driven by the breeze,

From twilight and the regions of the West,
Lit by dim stars, as if untraveled seas
Beneath stood tideless in unchanging rest;
Or, as if Egypt's level waste of sand
Lay in submission of the Sphynx's breast,
Their eyes, these stars; thy mottled wings had fanned,
O'er flowery lawns, the balmy air between.
Eager and palpitant to reach the brand
Which was thy doom; as one who scorns the mean
'Twixt earth and heaven, lifting far too high
His love unquenchable and ever keen

To some cold flame fixed in the windless
sky;
It was with thee e'en as with us who
yearn
For vaster visions, and whose spirits
burn.

The risen moon floods valley, hill, and
plain
With crystalline splendor, and the
trees show clear;
Yet thou art still from that brief fit of
pain,
Dead ere the summer, which made
living dear.
Through flame, the sepulcher from fabled
eld,
Of genius and of love, and all who
wear

The robe of beauty, and whose spirits held
Converse with heaven;—miracle of hues,
The rapt intelligence which once propelled
Thy peacock pinions through the falling dews,
Slipped to a sleep whereof this summer's dream
Is its dim dream, whose memories interfuse,
Of fragrant ways and glassy star-lit stream
With frailer dreams, until thy fancied flight
Glimmers away in some unvisioned night.

Yet it is beautiful to perish so;
Ere the bright velvet of thy wings was marred;
Ere leaves do fall and frosty breezes blow.
How sorrowful upon some lifeless sward,
I had beheld thee, lying stiff and dumb,
The cold dew on thy wings. Like some great bard,
Who, living past his time of song, grows dumb,
And still the figure of a perished past
Mutters of triumphs in a time to come.
But thou, like those whose requiem was a blast,
Of deathless music quickening the pyre,
Hast won death so, while every mead is grassed,

Tender and green, thy being's rapt desire.
Teach us that youth and genius brave his breath,
And grow immortal at the kiss of death!

ILLINOIS

ILLINOIS, an empire is thine of billowy
fields of glory,
Meadows of stretching green and
forests whose depths are cool,
Hills that brighten in spring o'er rivers
that tell a story
Of peace in the June-days mirrored
in many a lucent pool.

Measureless miles of sunlight lie on the
flowerful meadows,
Flamed with the clover blooms, with
purple flags by the mere.

Deep in the maple woods is the silence of restful shadows,
Where the cry of the restless jay is joyful and clear.

Yes, if the whole world barred us, still the bountiful season
Would garner a foison of fruit and of golden grain.
Blessed is this land of ours, a stranger to nature's treason,
Which smiles 'neath the mingled graces of sun and rain.

Thine is a sturdy race, a bulwark in days of peril;
Whose children are fit for the field, or the hall of state.
Rich is this soil of mind, nor shall it ever grow sterile

While the great Republic thrills
with a sense of fate.

Here shall our epic thrive in the ages
hereafter:
Song of a noble race, its growth is
already begun.
All that was done before shall be food
for the high god's laughter—
The flower of Art is the child of the
soil and sun.

Here War is the thrall of Peace; give us
the epic of gladness,
The triumph and not the trial, the
victory of mankind;
Where Science has stilled the ghost of
the old world's sadness,
And Art is a glorious hymn of the
perfect mind.

NITOCRIS

NITOCRIS, Queen of Babylon, had cut
Above the doorway of her granite tomb
Words of this import: "Keep these portals shut
To all my great successors yet to come;
But haply, should his majesty have need
Of moneys, he may open and withdraw
Such proper sums as fit the end. Take heed—
This is the Queen's injunction and the law."

But when Darius broke the heavy gates
And sought the treasure with unholy hand,
He felt how base he is who violates
Whate'er the dead may leave as their command,
And read these words: "Most wicked and profane,
Most covetous and sordid, here to tread,
That thou should'st through a selfish greed of gain,
Despoil and loot the chambers of the dead!"

THE LARK

IT was a little bird that sang for them
Under an April sky;
And they heard the silver notes of the lark
In a field of growing rye.
For the spirit of life is everywhere
In the tender weather of spring.
And their love blossomed out like the reddest roses
To hear the meadow lark sing.

Ah, greenest fields and flowering meadows,
Under an April sky,
Love kindles the spirit of joy in the heart
And brings the tear to the eye.
April has gone and the summer is dying,
The lark should have taken wing,
For their hearts leap up with a sudden pain
When they hear him sing.

ROMANCE

ROMANCE that loves the flower
Best in its early bower,
White moons, the twilight hour,
The morn, the eve;
Flies when the sun of thought
Through its frail surge has shot
Light, like the sand which wrought
Gold through the sieve.

Once in this solitude,
Deep in this laurel wood,
A Grecian temple stood;
Fair, chaste and high;

Its front entablature
The shapes of sea-gods bore,
One star hung o'er it pure
In mellow sky.

Around, beneath, above,
Arose the songs of love,
The songs that stir, that move,
That wake, that thrill;
The glancing laurel leaves
Shook with the summer seas,
Crinkled by midnight breeze,
In star-light still.

No man might go within
Stained with the world's large sin—
Fair maids with raiment thin,
Went in or out.
And men whose hearts could feel
Deep love for the ideal,

Whose faith no worlds could steal,
Or stain with doubt.

But now the temple lies
Before its enemies—
They jeer, they satirize
Its fallen state.
Likewise the laurel grove
Wherein all music throve,
The steel of sorrow clove
And laid prostrate.

Where waved the blossomed bough
The villian drives the plough
The weighted cornstalks bow
In sensual pride;
Where sang the nightingale
The crow and vulture rail;
Rent is the dreamy veil
Which beautified.

WHAT YOU WILL

APRIL rain, delicious weeping,
Washes white bones from the grave,
Long enough have they been sleeping.
They are cleansed, and now they crave
Once more on the earth to gather
Pleasure from the springtime weather.

The pine trees and the long dark grass
Feed on what is placed below.
Think you not that there doth pass
In them something we did know?
This spell—well friends, I greet ye once again
With joy—but with a most unuttered pain.

WHEN LEAVES WERE SERE

WHEN leaves were sere, and skies were dun
And birds were still, and snows begun,
And bright the Dog and Triple Tun
From Autumn's cloudy gale;
What time the stars arose and set,
There were rare bouts of winged wit,
When Johnson and when Shakespeare met,
O'er cups of English ale,
Ah me,
O'er cups of English ale.

If candles since have burned as bright,
As then they did on many a night,
Yet wit was never since so light,
    Nor wisdom since so hale,
Ere we forget them, let us praise
The glory of those vanished days,
Their cordial cheer, their manly ways,
    Their cups of hearty ale,
        Ah me,
    Their cups of hearty ale.

CERES AND PROSERPINE

NOW Enna bathed in one vast sheet of light
Moved to and fro its sea of fragrant grass.
When Proserpine who led a blooming throng
Of maids fresh filleted with bare white feet
Came forth to gather flowers for her hair.
And while with shouts they ran now here now there

With flying stoles as white as summer clouds
A wondrous prodigy came o'er the scene.
For lo! a little crack spread near her step,
Which moving serpent wise grew long and wide,
And from it issued curls of purple smoke
Which thickened densely 'till a heavy cloud
Blotted the golden air. Then from the gulf
Fire breathing steeds whose eyes were glowing coals
Yoked to a chariot of iron arose.
The visage of the charioteer was dark
Whose raven hair smote the retreating blast.

And 'round the spokeless wheels emitting sparks
Smoke whirled and clung as to a waterwheel
The falling waters circle into spray.
So was my loss accomplished, for at once
Amid the shrieks of her companions, she
Was carried in the chariot out of sight.
Now doth my longing lengthen with the days,
Soon will the echoes of the shepherd's reed
Bewitch my steps o'er meadow, hill and plain.
By night or day I'll follow on, or if
'Tis morn or noon, or if the humid night
Tranced with the sighs of ocean-tides make sweet

The dim, long ways. Or through old
woods where sleep
The sprites of summer, I must take my
way
Through silences that speak like tones
of life.
But when young April weeps warm
tears for me,
The gods know where, in wooded vale
or where
High purple rocks are beacons for the
flames
Cf daffodils, or by a cave, or near
Some slender brook, or on some gentle
hill
My child shall clasp me with a long
embrace.
As once reposing near the southern sea
Worn with regret and travel, she arose
Being released a season of her lord.

Then as her large fawn eyes looked into
mine,
Joy of this meeting and restrained
regret
For this strange doom that binds both
her and me
A lark burst into song above our heads;
A shadow of mild green fell swift as
light
On all the earth, and one strong sigh of
wind
Charged with the smell of opening leaves
and flowers
Blew through the tresses of my won-
drous child.

RETRIBUTION

THE moon was a hornèd light,
Around no cloud was seen,
And there in the wood the specter stood,
That haunted St. Augustine.

For it rode a death gray horse,
'Twas clothed in a flowing cloak
And it beckoned men to its mid-wood den
In the shades of the giant oak.

None went—but wait you shall hear
The tale as it should be told;
For a man receives whatever he gives,
Whatever he metes is doled.

One night when the moon was low
And still was the hour and late
A man leaped forth from the under-
growth,
With a dagger of deadly hate.

And the man who rode a horse,
All clad in a flowing cloak,
Was murdered there, ere he was
aware,
And hid by the giant oak.

But later the moon being low,
When around no cloud was seen,
The murderer stood by the edge of the
wood
That bounds St. Augustine.

And sudden before his sight,
A shape on a death gray horse;

And his limbs waxed stiff, and he felt as if
In the hands of an awful force.

Then it beckoned him with its hand:
He would shout but he had no voice,
And he followed the dead, wherever it led,
For he had no other choice.

He followed the specter on,
And never a word was spoke
Till their steps were staid, where the corse was laid
'Neath the boughs of the giant oak.

And there by the feeble light
Of the horned and sinking moon,

The specter stood and raised its hood,
And the man fell down in a swoon.

And the demons that lurked around,
The horrors and all remorse,
Did choke his breath, to the land of death,
And left his body a corse.

Since then no one has seen
The specter there as of old,
For a man receives whatever he gives,
Whatever he metes is doled.

THE VANQUISHED

I GRIEVE for those o'er whom the heavy wheel
Has driven the car of carvéd silver and gold;
With the speed of triumph, and the flash of the victor's steel
Beating the conquered beneath the ensanguined mould.

What! was the Persian King not as bent on the prize
As the Greek who triumphed and vanquished him from the sea?

Two thousand years and more yet his spirit must agonize
For our taunts and the pæans we raise for that victory.

And how could he who launched the Phillippics rise
So vastly great had his rival been common and mean?
Fools that we are, we forget him or else we despise
That the praise of the victor may keep his fame ever green.

Alas! for the spirit consumed in a fruitless cause,
For the splendor of thought that destroys the thinker alone;
Was the heart of Hayne in the right forbidding a pause

To the fray with the lion of state
who welcomed him on?

Why howl ye that some have arisen
where others fell?
For the Samsons who slay a tribe
with an ass's jaw?
For Achilles whose wrath sent the souls
of unnumbered to hell
And rose in his might, a figure for
praise and eternal awe?

I grieve for those who earnestly strove
and failed,
Who were either eclipsed or fell with
the fall of a wrong;
Whom the steps of death o'ertook ere
the noon was hailed;
The revenge of the years, the shouts
of the thoughtless throng!

THE WHITE CITY

THE autumnal sky is blue like June's,
The wooded isle is sere below
Reflected in the still lagoons
Beneath the full noon's brilliant glow.
Around the wondrous buildings show
Their sculptured roofs and domes and towers,

Like Rome, ere crime had laid her low,
Ere the rude North's barbaric powers
O'erwhelmed her art, which now again is ours.

See the triumphal columns crowned
By Neptunes—see Diana there,
The tense bow ready to rebound ;
And Victory's wings are high in air.
See Liberty within her chair,
And over all the Republic stands,
With countenance serene and fair,
The staff and eagle in her hands,
Whom we adore, because she loosed our bands.

And back of all the Peristyle
Protects the land against the sea,
And here the flashing fountains smile

And varied flags float full and free,
A solemn splendor which may be
The presence of the majestic dead,
Reigns in the air until the knee
Would bend in reverence, and the head
Be bowed for truths we have inherited.

Aye, truths and beauty and the power
Which makes this vision all our own,
Though for a brief and passing hour;
Aye, all which drove beyond the cone
Of light, of thought, the withered crone
Old superstition. Plato reared
Within the mind his burnished throne—
But Bacon o'er the sea of knowledge steered

And sought out nature where all
men had feared.

Then steam grasped ponderous wheels
and drove
The winged car from shore to shore,
And swifter than the thoughts of love
The tense electric wires bore
Their freight of thought the long miles
o'er,
Till naught was hidden from men's
eyes
Where all was miracle before,
The earth lay conquered and the
skies
Unveiled themselves to man's great
enterprise.

Then Justice shook to earth her chains
Unfettered now to do her will:

And Liberty expunged the stains
Of blood in centuries of ill.
The awakened earth shook off the chill
Of darkness as her heart grew warm
To deeds of daring right, and still
The nations fairer grew of form,
In that great birth, the child of that fierce storm.

And thus where art and science hoard
The trophies of the fruitful years,
The mighty spirits which out-soared
The shadows of their trials and tears,
Dante's and Homer's and Shakespeare's
Seem hovering in the sun-lit air,
Now when the attentive spirit hears
The first sighs of the year's despair,

While sorrow dyes the earth in hues
most fair.

Hark! The Ave Maria rings
From out yon fretted minaret
Enshadowed by the twilight's wings;
Behold the golden sun has set,
Ten thousand lamps blaze in the jet
Of water, shadowed nook, and tree;
Above, the stars again are met.
This is a heavenly fantasy—
Ah, that this dream should ever
cease to be.

And lo! How white, how glorious
These fanes and temples now ap-
pear;
How pure a mood is now o'er us,
The evening bell is sweet and clear.
And there by Dian's brow, how near,

A star shines singly and alone;
Right o'er the dome's symmetric sphere!
The flags against the sky are blown—
And all we cherished once is quickly
gone.

WALT WHITMAN

THE earth which gives and takes,
Which fashions and unmakes
Whate'er we prize
Has drawn unto her breast
The face which knew her best,
The kindliest face we had and closed
his eyes.
While Aeschylos and Job had gone
before,

And all strong inspiration long was o'er
He struck the harp to ancient melodies.

The great Republic's love
For which he pained and strove
With might and sense;
Whereto he raised his song,
Which drives like leaves along
Strong thoughts in storms of primal eloquence,
Grieves for him dead, and clips his flowing hair,
Decks with sweet flowers the place about his bier,
For him who has departed bravely thence.

The soul of him who could

Find true in false, and good
In everything.
From woman, man and boy
Learned all he knew, took joy
In masonry and mines and house-
building.
Like those Prometheus taught at wis-
dom s birth,
Has floated from the shadow of our
earth,
To heights the mighty reach on
dauntless wing.

The eagle eye, which saw
The spirit's worth, the law
Of fairer fate
The Nation's final form
Through past and future storm,
The fabric of a safe and gracious
state,

Is closed by envious death, but not in vain
The vision he projected will remain,
To be our life hereafter soon or late.

He knew these pageants pass
As in a magic glass
And fill the shade
With substance, which before
Was empty, that no more
Is reached than dreamed of, for which men have paid
In hopes and deeds, in virtue and in love,
In every noble thing man dreameth of
In casting off despairs which on him weighed.

He was the truest child,
Our Western world beguiled
And heaven bestowed.

Vast as our plains of wheat,
Sweet as our winds are sweet
    High as our mountains in the
        feathery cloud.
As strong as rivers flowing from the
        west,
Fruitful as California's sea-washed
        breast
    Broad as the land he made his loved
        abode.

He flung the past aside
The gods of field and tide
    Of hill and plain.
The green tree was his shrine
To him, all things divine
    The common road, small hamlets,
        drought and rain.
The Sun, which is Apollo, was his
        god,

Gave in his hand the gold divining
rod
And said, I clasp the world and
have no stain.

In seasons of despair,
In times of poisoned air
He kept the faith
Of cheerfulness, of strength,
Of man's triumph at length,
The love of life had given him love
of death.
He stretched his hands, he could not
know to whom,
With sandals of content he proved the
gloom,
Like fall's first sighs he gave away
his breath.

There on the beetling heights,

Above our days and nights
Our shade and shine.
He is enthroned serene,
The great of old between,
The guardian of the land he made divine.
What though the great Republic grieveth sore,
For thee her bridegroom hastened on before,
The pilgrim's bride will leave her hopes for thine.

THE TWO FOES

ONE had two foes as wakeful as the snake
Intent upon its prey to do him wrong;
A man and woman who for hate's own sake
Spread snares and scattered poison all along
The path they trod. And while at first their deeds,
Had no concert of plan, for neither mind
Knew of the other's hate, at last the seeds
Each one was sowing crossed, as men may find

Some strange distortion spring from plants that grew
Too closely, so their several hates gave birth
To one unholy passion when they knew
The mutual thoughts that robbed each heart of mirth.

And as for him, though somewhat worn with age,
The curse of Envy made each word he spoke
A venemous toad, and impotent with rage
He raved, or into obscene laughter broke,
Seeking to overthrow the true and sage
Who scorned his hate. And as for her enough

To chronicle the fate that to her fell;
For surely all her soul was turned to love
Ere evil thoughts made inexpresible
Its dissonance, and fitted her to be
The boon companion of that hideous shape.
In short, they wedded, and his soul set free
From their divided lives, could not escape
Joy of revenge, in thinking that these two
Must sting each other's spirits through and through.

BYRON

THESE are the falls men name St. Anthony;
This is the mighty Mississippi's source
And I have watched with what tempestuous force
These torrents plunge and struggle to be free
Among sharp rocks their vexéd destiny.
But where the waters of the gulf are hoarse
Dim, vast, intent, this river takes its course
Still as the surface of a charméd sea.

There was a man of strong and passion-
ate youth
Clothed with the might of waters
which o'er-leapt
The bounds of time; and had he
only kept
The streams of life which deepen toward
the mouth
Of the eternal sea, then had they
swept
Flecked with a thousand stars of patient
truth!

AFTER THE FIGHT: IN ROME

FORTH from the fading lights that lit the scene
Of gladitorial strife, the multitude,
Impetuously rushed, and I who stood
Somewhat removed, behind the wall's thick screen,
Paused 'till I saw an opening between
The surging crowd. Then made my fancy good
By stealing softly through, and all unviewed

Of those who watch me with familiar
mien.
How sweet it was to leave the City,
fly
From the oppression of the theatre;
The sanguine dust, the cruel crowd, the
stir
Of hateful passion, and the dying
eye.
Ah, neath my palm tree to lie thought-
ful here
Charmed by the planets of the mid-
night sky!

WHENE'ER THE SKY IS VERY DEEP AND BLUE

WHENE'ER the sky is very deep and blue,
And he who lounges looking up may see
Far 'bove the languid clouds, it seems to me
That I must be unhappy 'till I woo
Sweet nature in no common mood, for who
Hath never longed once more to wander free
In olden woods, or with old comrades be

Or childish sweethearts long remembered too?
The only sadness that this weather brings
Is that I cannot fully reach the joy
It should inspire—for if I were a boy
Mem'ry were not, and all these sober things
Could not distain the spirit or alloy
The pleasure of the crickets' murmurings!

CHANT À MARS

WHEN March's breezes blow,
Cool with the melting snow,
Fresh with the sun's new warmth that falls oblique;
The houses' corners groan,
And valleys give a moan
For things we find no more, where'er we seek.

In fields that sleep serene;
That show suspected green;

The winter's water in each hollow lies.
Wherein like castinets,
The frog its music sets,
To winds that rise and fall, and fall and
rise.
Over the hills the clouds
Throw swiftly falling shrouds—
Over the plain they follow swift as
light.
The vexed sun glides between
The mists of shade and sheen,
And hastens to his summer's glor-
ious might.

Old hopes are now renewed;
Fond fancies re-imbued,
With sweetness of their prime, long
past and gone;
Old memories and dear,
Sound in the dreamy ear

Like tinkling bells upon a distant
lawn.

What is the year? What we
Who know sùch ecstasy?
Who die with autumn and with
spring revive?
Winds, clouds, and sun, and rain;
The wakening wood, the plain—
'Tis very joy to be this day alive.

We sit this brook beside;
Here where the winter died;
Where miracles of flowers and buds
are wrought,
Through earth and heaven afar;
Through things that seem, and are,
Let Fancy shepherd mild and won-
dering thought.

FLORA

On the Picture of Sandro Botticelli

THIS is the face of Flora—come and look!
Her wild fawn eyes are gazing into thine;
Her hair falls o'er her temples silken fine
And round her neck; within its skeins are shook
The blossoms of the spring which at one strook
She oped and filled their eyes with dewy wine.
And thus her gazing makes my spirit pine,

For what it fancied by a little brook:—
Once when the spring rose from the winter's trance,
Yet slept as when the green buds first appear,
And new leaves start half shy between the leaves—
Stretched in a wood, I saw this wild nymph peer
With dreamy eyes at me, and that same glance,
Bred a sweet pain which Spring fore'er revives.

A FAIR PICTURE

HERE in this counterfeit of life behold
All that begot the ancient bards despair.
Who strove with art of cunning song to share
With men to be their ecstacy, and sold
Life and the peace thereof, and hope of gold
To keep in glory of rhyme her wondrous hair,
And all her ways and looks that she might fare

Haply and as she was in days of old.
And so her face that makes a work of art
This fragile parchment wherein it is set
By grace of light and shadow having met—
To rosiest flint its glory should impart
Carved carefully into a statuette
Or have the treasuring of the lyrist's heart.

A WOMAN OF GENIUS

THERE was a golden flower whose life was fed
By spiritual fire and dew and tender air;
Held warm by starlight in a Dryad's hair
Until the shadows from Hesperus fled.
Near by stood Himures with averted head
From too much love, and now but half aware;
Likewise high Hope and all shapes good and fair.

Each waiting for her petals to be spread.
Anon amid the crimson hues of morn,
And delicate lightnings, as the Dryad stole
For comfort in green leaves; the west wind blew
The nestling petals free; and so was born
Through all the gods' desire your wondrous soul.
Which all men worship for their love of you.

INGRATITUDE

PENSIVE amid these walls of beetling gloom
After life's restless struggle, I am here,
In Death's own land, beyond the flight of fear,
Void of all sound and sterile of all bloom.
For when the noise and clamor of life's loom
Stopped suddenly, and Silence, like a mere
Engulfed the roar of earth, my soul fell sheer

Down in the hollow of this changeless doom.
Ah! derelict upon this shore, washed in
By the last tide of fate, and like a shell
Re-echoing the tenor of the sea!
I brood on this as my most grievous sin,
That he who was my friend and loved me, fell
Through my ingratitude and treachery.

THE SOLUTION

AH! many times have I in some rapt mood
Marveled that sage nor saint has ever heard
Out of the infinite mystery any word,
Whether of ill to mortals or of good.
For wandering often in the silent wood,
When anxious questionings and sorrows gird
The eager heart, it feels its instincts stirred
To audience of things not understood

In ages gone; wherethrough no voice cried yea
To ease the terror of the perished years.
And yet no message came; wherefore these fears,
Should hie them like the shadows from the day;
This very silence all the mystery clears;
And naught is said, for there is naught to say.

DISCEPTRED

THIS barren tree, dead, withered, which lifts high
Its barkless boughs to heaven in appeal,
Reminds me of that king who would unseal
The future by portentous birds which fly
O'er one lone peak—just as these twigs now sigh
So sighed old Barbarossa, who could feel
The past too deeply, longing to reveal

His presence in the strength of monarchy,
Yon points are perches for the screaming
jay,
The crow, the vulture, and the
hooded hawk;
The mild winds set them creaking—yet
what wars
They waged of yore when storms
abroad did stalk—
Disrobed, disceptred, robbed of life's
sweet day,
And sense of power beneath the glanc-
ing stars.

ON READING ECKERMAN'S CONVERSATIONS WITH GOETHE

SOME say that visioned men at times have seen
Far down a dreamy vista which did close,
With brilliant clouds, the topaz and the rose.
The which did tremble gorgeously and screen
From mortal gaze the shapes of gods serene;
And looking thence entranced have heard the doze
Of thunder music, and man's deepest woes

From lips immortal, dream and thought
between.
I too, have heard deep voices of that
kind,
And watched the distant halcyons
wing their way
Around one peak of Peace that
pierced a day
Of clearest light, seen clouds and felt
the wind
From heights of thought, and heard
its notes at play
Adown the Olympus of one matchless
mind.

THE SPHYNX

AH, men have canvassed with their subtlest wit
The cold face of the Sphynx, to learn what lies
Within the far look of its lidless eyes—
Those wizard eyes that pierce the veil, and hit
The awful secret, while its lips are lit
With scorn supernal, that we agonize,
And hope and pray for that which ever flies
Beyond our utmost grasp to compass it.

Look o'er the level waste of Egypt's land,
Thou symbol of the unattainable!
Still smile thy scorn, but know I caution well
All men to leave thee to thy lone command;
For whoe'er seeks thy face his thought to quell,
Thou fallest on, and crushest in the sand!

NAPOLEON BEFORE THE PYRAMIDS

THE mightest form of late ambition met
The ancient's sternest when Napoleon stood
Within the spell of that dim solitude
Which wraps the pyramids, when night has set
Her few, large, solemn stars enskyed to fret
The cone of heaven. Twins of the same brood!
For thou didst trample down the multitude

That fame might never more repay the debt
In trumpetings for thee, for thy powers's sake.
Whilst these, disceptered by the monarch Death
Hoped haply they should rise up from beneath
These piles whose rearing made ten thousand ache.
In different ways ye sought immortal breath,
And found it for the sorrows ye did make.

AN ANCIENT JURIST

THERE was a jurist in the days of old
Whom grace of Fate made judge, it was a pity!
Some said that he was learned in Coke and Chitty,
And therefore had a right to roar and scold
And babble in a manner manifold.
So that the rumblings of a noisy city
Scarce drowned his voice, he was so very witty,

Tempestuous and blustering and cold.
This legal Vulcan let the hammer drop
From day to day and fashioned strange decrees,
And made all suitors very ill at ease
Because he roared and found no way to stop.
A wag at last stuck up such words as these:
"This is a court and not a boiler-shop."

A VISION OF ART

AH Flora, of blue eyes and throat so slender,
And brows as lustrous as the driven snow;
When the carved doors of fancy open go
I see thee there in robes of brilliant splendor.
This is strong vision, for at most some tender
Mood of an afternoon enwraps me so
That 'tis thy presence o'er my thoughts which flow

As visionless as those which stringed notes render.
In thine own Temple Art preserves her treasures,
Pale busts and vases and a Japan jar,
Full of spiced leaves, a careless lent guitar,
A polished floor where tiger rugs are strewn.
Upon the lawn a marble fountain measures
The happy hours beneath a sky of June.

AFTER THE RAIN

COME, for the soul of music is awake,
The breeze is up, the azure sky is bare
The twinkling leaves are sparkling in this air
Of glory and within the fragrant brake
The quail calls, and around the meadowed lake
A numerous flock of singing blackbirds fare.

All choristers that in the lightings' glare
Kept silence in the trees, are forth to take
The freshness that has followed from the storm.
Wrecks of the cloud are sailing in the breeze,
And in the flashes of the evening sun
The genii of the air shake from the trees
The jewel water drops in which they swarm
And the half-moon floats in her sea pearl-wan.

LIFE'S SOLDIER

LIFE'S soldier brave, in moods both grave and gay
You watch the drama where the actors pass
Swiftly and vague like shadows o'er the grass.
And see the varied movements of the play,
Started at morn and finished in a day.
Here do we look as through a darkened glass
At friend and foe amid the struggling mass,

And the vexed spirit beaten and at bay
Frowns and reflects. But often do we feel
The under current, and the deeper thought
Seems ever as it would unveil its form.
So amid duties you shall not conceal
Your mood of listening to the music wrought
Above the thunder of the city's storm.

APOLLO AT THE PLOW

(Chatterton to his Friend)

FAITHFULEST and dearest of the friends I have,
Forgive me for the weakness which I show,
That while youth is, its nerve, its spur, its glow,
Are quite consumed. Forgive me if I crave
A deep repose, aye even in the grave,
Forgive me, that the fires of hope burn low,
Condemned to ignominious steps and slow
'Mong ravin' wolves within a prison cave—

If you could see me now. But what
I was
Thou knowest well—and from thy
memory
Ambition's shape will rise—then
quickly pass
To me the Sampson of these grind-
ing days,
Apollo plowing lorn and ruefully,
His harp abandoned in the flower-
less ways.

BALLADE OF SALEM TOWN

WHERE is the inn of Salem Town
Where Lincoln loafed ere we knew his name?
When the Clarys from Prairie Grove were down,
And he kindled mirth with his wit like flame.
Loud are these things on the lips of fame,
But crumbled to dust is the log-wood wall,
And perished alike are 'squire and dame—
The toiling year is the Lord of all.

Where is the mill of such renown?
And the sluice where the swirling waters came?
And the hamlet's sage and the rustic clown
And those who had glory and those who had shame?
And those who lost in this curious game;
The bully, the acred-lord and his thrall—
Gone are they all beyond Time's reclaim—
The toiling year is the Lord of all.

But when jest passed 'twixt laggard and lown
And the cold wind whined at the window frame,

Then careless alike of smile or frown
He builded for those who should carp or blame,
Thereafter when Error should seek to maim
The hand of Liberty in her hall,
When he made Malice and Treason tame—
The toiling year is the Lord of all.

ENVOY

Prince! this shaft of marble is brown
Ere a cycle is past, and at last will fall
But fame has fashioned his fadeless crown
The toiling year is the Lord of all.

BALLADE OF SOCRATES

YE men of Athens, list to Socrates,
And mark me how the Delphic oracle
Hath stripped me of the robes of joy and ease
The price of those who triumph and excel.
And stung my soul with questions which impel
My test of men who coax the tongue of fame.
I have had nothing but a world of blame
Much sorrow and deep bitterness of heart

Some strange misgivings and the gift of
shame—
And yet, oh life how sweet and dear
thou art.

Devoid of those accomplishments which
please
With little skill in love, it so befell
I won my wife Xantippe, greater tease
Than these hard questions, harder
far to quell.
But having seen how baneful is
love's spell,
More dread than Circe's making men her
game,
And that a wife's tongue is a subtle
flame,
A whip of steel, a goad, a poisoned
dart,

I have known all things which the god can claim—
And yet, oh life, how sweet and dear thou art.

I have searched out all men's philosophies
And I have known all things desirable,
And by the calm eternity of seas
My spirit conversed with Poseidon's knell.
Through strife and grief I kept my patience well,
Through noisy folly, insolent acclaim.
I have known all that men can think or frame,
Hope for, aspire to, suffer or impart—

Vexed with the heavy question whence we came—
And yet, oh life, how sweet and dear thou art.

ENVOY

Great Zeus! thou knowest men despise, defame
My search for truth and beauty, and my name.
Thou knowest also that our days depart
In vanity fore'er beyond reclaim—
And yet, oh life, how sweet and dear thou art!

BALLADE OF THE STAGE

AN hour before the glowing stage
We watch the actors come and go
Within the mimic equipage
The hero, coward, friend and foe.
The curtain falls anon, and lo!
Famed Athens looms above, perdie,
The world's great theme of joy and woe—
Holds thought and revery in fee.

The time of sophist and of sage
Who sought the future to fore-
know,
Of knight and vassal, squire and
page,
Whom death with all of theirs laid
low,
Bequeathing to the stage to show
Whate'er they felt of grief or glee,
By which the soul of man should
grow
Holds thought and revery in fee.

Ah! where are those whom sacred rage
Made life a torture doubly slow?
Whose fire of spirit lit the age—
Who mocked death's seeming over-
throw?
The play of man went to and fro;

They saw and vanquished fate's decree —
For all their genius did bestow
Holds thought and revery in fee.

ENVOY

Prince, we shall live in Art, although
Death comes to set our spirits free.
And he who lies beneath the snow
Holds thought and revery in fee.

BALLADE OF SAM JOHNSON

"He was kind that night"
—Boswell's Johnson.

ONCE when the festal board was merry
With sparkling wine and with Johnson's jest
The loud sage smiled and was gracious, very
Even to Boswell's wakeful zest.
The Chronicler's memory held this best

For lo! the satirist was polite;
And wrote it out on his palimpsest—
Ah but Johnson was kind that night!

Boswell the taker of notes was wary
Since Johnson in sudden wrath addressed,
A shaft of scorn which no wit could parry
The barbs whereof Time could but divest.
And Boswell taking therefrom unrest
Traveled o'er sea like a sorry wight
And found at last the boon of his quest!
Ah but Johnson was kind that night!

Nectar, ambrosia, Tom and Jerry
What they tippled no man has guessed;
Ruddy port wine or golden sherry
Boswell's pages fail to attest.
The board was joyful 'tis manifest—
All else suffers in Time's despite,
For the scar was cured in Boswell's breast—
Ah but Johnson was kind that night!

ENVOY

Sam, how vain did you make protest
And heap on Boswell many a slight.
Still he preserved your great bequest,
Ah but Johnson was kind that night!

ST. MARY'S

FAIR eyes the shrines of dreams,
The heavens of love;
Bright hair whose splendor gleams
Thereout above.
Within the cloister arch,
She holds a spray of larch
The day is hers and all the joy
thereof.

Ah Clio all thy soul
Is fully gone

Within the carven scroll
Thou gazest on.
Be not so thoughtful wise,
For one with tender eyes,
Looks to forget o'er all the level lawn.

Through drooping trees that stir
And scarce suspire
The sky looks in to her
The day's pale fire;
The fountain's rainbow mist,
The rose, the amethyst,
The happy field that feels no more desire.

If bright clouds float above,
And throw bright shade
Throughout this laurel grove

Where she hath strayed;
When all the day is still,
What sorrow scorns her will?
What thoughts, what dreams, that
can not be allayed?

'Tis June, the rose is full
And water flows;
Whate'er is beautiful
With her arose;
Fresh morns, and bounteous
noons,
Large planets, argent moons,
White hours whose pluméd wings
regret to close.

Yet, Clio, piteous voice
Of all our deeds,
Her heart cannot rejoice

Whene'er she heeds
The scroll, almost complete,
Closed book of days most sweet,
Dear words, that grow more dear
the while, she reads.

The painéd muses gaze
Seeing how near
The end is of school days
For Julia here;
Melodious Greek, romance,
Light, laughter, dream, the dance:
Smooth, golden thought that comes
through many ways.

Dark eyes, the shrines of grief,
The heavens of thought;
Regret hath no relief
For days out-wrought.

Down from the cloister arch,
She drops the spray of larch,
The sun is sunk, and still is every
leaf.

IN CHURCH

The passion of the organ's breath
Comes over me;
The resurrected life, the death,
The agony.

The fair light through the purple panes
Is purple too,
The spring wind's music swells and wanes,
The window through.

The air is filled with hues, with scent
Too faintly sweet,
Like souls that rise, where they were bent
From Jesus' feet.

I have strange heart for prayer and hymn,
For stoléd choir
They blend unto my spirit's utmost rim,
In my desire.

The deep expressions of earth's love
Become all mine,
Of individual grief, they move
All thoughts divine.

To her of fairest face and even
Of fairest name,

The divine of earth and heaven,
Are one, the same.

Be this my plea—Her spirit is
In all the air.
She is the flower, the organ's bliss
The holy prayer.

If she were spirit all, descended
From realms divine,
Her spirit were no further blended,
To one, with mine.

Yet if her life had slipped away
She were more dear;
Dear souls of heaven to whom we pray,
To whom draw near.

But earth forbids much, whence much grief
To us who live;
Ah for the long dreamed-of relief
That hope can give.

Or else that she should be ensphered,
A golden star,
By death, a beacon thrice endeared
To me afar;

A star, a holy hope, a guide,
A saint, a shrine;
A tender heart, on earth denied.
In turn for mine.

* * *

All songs are sung, the latest note
Has died away;
From hues which o'er the chancel float,
We pass to-day.

And she of fairest face and even
Of fairest name,
The divine of earth and heaven,
Are one, the same.

THE SEA

Βῆ δ' ἀκέων παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης
Iliad Book I

I WHO am inland born, have sometimes heard
The sea's deep voice—a momentary wail
When high waves rise and fly before the gale
And dash upon the beetling cliffs that gird
His wide domain; or with the fancy stirred,
Seen at the sun-light's edge a glittering sail
Under a sky serene and brightly pale
O'er darkling tides where wheeled the sad sea-bird.

But when I peering from the lonely
shore
Shall gaze upon the waters dancing
free,
Then I shall feel like him on Mount
Nebo,
Or like the myriad shouting loud
"the sea,"
Or like the gray priest, in his silent woe,
Who walked and heard their many
voices roar!

YES, WHEN THE BLEAK STORM BLEW

YES, when the bleak storm blew
Gray cloud and mist,
Young Love took wing and flew,
Scorned and unkist.

False joy, the seneschal,
Shouted him forth,
Shut from the rosy hall,
Out to the north.

Then while the dancers gay
Heard the bassoon—
And all the orchestra
Warmed into tune.

Was he incensed, did he
    Pine in the wold
Blanch in the north winds' dree,
    Bitter and cold?

Nay, for the April came
    Mild air and rain
Touched into flowerful flame
    Valley and plain.

But 'round the door there grew,
    Never a bloom.
Drear was the house to view,
    Gray as a tomb.

False joy, the seneschal
    Wept at the door,
Vain were his tears and all—
    Love came no more!

HELEN OF TROY

On an ancient vase representing in bas-relief the flight of Helen.

THIS is the vase of love
Whose feet would ever rove
In fragrant ways;
Whose hopes forever seek
Bright eyes, the vermeiled cheek,
And cloudless days.

Though we do understand
Why thou didst leave thy land,
Thy spouse, thy hearth;
Yet for thy self Greek art
Hath made our heart thy heart,
Thy mirth our mirth.

For Paris did appear
Curled hair and rosy ear
And tapering hands.
He spoke—the blood ran fast,
He touched, and killed the past,
And clove its bands.

And this, I deem, is why
The restless ages sigh,
Helen, for thee.
Whate'er we do or dream,
Whate'er we say or seem,
We would be free.

We would be free from strife
And all the pain of life,
And all the care;
We would find out new seas,

And lands more strange than these,
And flowers more fair.

We would behold fresh skies
Where summer never dies,
And amaranths spring.
Lands where the halcyon hours
Nest over scented bowers
On folded wing.

We would be crowned with bays
And spend the long bright days
On sea or shore;
Or sit by haunted woods
And watch the deep sea's moods,
And hear its roar.

Beneath that ancient sky

Who is not fain to fly
As men have fled?
Ah! we would know relief
From marts of wine and beef,
And oil and bread.

Helen of Troy—Greek art
Hath made our heart thy heart,
Thy love our love.
For poesy like thee
Must fly and wander free
As any dove.

FAREWELL MUSES

HO! Muses nine,
If one be mine,
Should I then pine
For all the rest?
Nay, under my vine,
I'll sip my wine,
And herd the swine—
And forsake the quest.

For each man's breast
Hath a bard for guest
And ah! 'tis best
The bard should die.
Who heeds his behest
Will reap life's jest,
And the thorn hath pressed,
Where his heart would lie.

And ye who buy
Men's souls with a cry
To fame while ye fly
    The clasp they need;
It is vain to vie
With gods who deny,
And over you high
    The gods have heed.

They have decreed
Each word and deed—
You shall but feed
    The sacred flame,
And those you lead
With a syren reed
Will wish them freed
    From your evil claim.

No win a name

Is a worthy aim;
And how free from blame
Are the laurel leaves.
But 'tis a game
Where the swift get fame
And the slow have shame
And the weak heart grieves.

But all spent sheaves,
My Muse retrieves,
She fashions and weaves
With wheatless straw.
Whilst ye were thieves
Of my days and eves—
So my bosom heaves
For Themis—the law!

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